



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



SDDVA STAFF CHANGES

Program Manager Erin Bultje will be departing from the SDDVA ranks to join the team at the Sioux Falls VA Health Care System. She will be serving as the SFVAHCS Public Affairs Officer. She is taking the place of Shirley Redmond who retired in May.

Bultje began her career with SDDVA as a state veterans service officer and was promoted to serve as program manager overseeing South Dakota Joining Forces, processing appeals, training SDDVA personnel and developing tools to assist with training of CTVSOs. In addition, Bultje still wore the hat as state veterans service officer.

Bultje was a true team player and stepped forward to cover interviews, outreach, and speaking engagements. Bultje's last day with the Department is July 5. Please join us in wishing Erin the very best in this new chapter of her life.

SDDVA has two new state veterans service officers working in the Sioux Falls Claims Office—Ryan Sweeter and Brian Voges.

Ryan is an active duty Air Force veteran. Born and raised in Sioux Falls, Sweeter graduated from O'Gorman High School in 1993 and enlisted in the Air Force, where he served as an aircraft pneudraulics systems journeyman on C-130E Model aircraft in the 62nd Airlift Squadron at Little Rock Air Force Base in Jacksonville Arkansas. After four years of honorable service, Sweeter attended SDSU and earned a bachelor's degree in journalism, with a minor in political science. As a student at SDSU, he served as a legislative intern in the South Dakota House and covered Jackrabbit football, women's basketball and baseball for the *SDSU Collegian* student newspaper.

Sweeter's post-military career began as a television sports journalist at KDLT-TV in Sioux Falls, before he embarked on a 12-year career in athletic media relations, ten of those at South Dakota State and two at Augustana University.

Ryan lives in Sioux Falls with his wife, Tammy, and their pug, Boone.

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SDDVA STAFFING CHANGES

(CONTINUED)

Brian Voges started his new position with SDDVA as a state veterans service officer on June 10th. He had previously been employed by the State of South Dakota-Department of Public Safety as a driver license examiner, a position he held for two and a half years.

Prior to his employment with the State of South Dakota, he served with the South Dakota Air National Guard for 26 years, 22 of those years as an Active Guard Reserve (AGR) member. He enlisted into the security forces career field in Dec 1990 and later moved to the recruiting staff in 2002.

He was honorably discharged as a Senior Master Sergeant (E-8) and retired from the SD Air National Guard in December 2016.

In his spare time, he enjoys doing landscape and wildlife photography, fishing and going to Stampede hockey games.

Brian and his wife Shannon, have one daughter, Keisha, son-in-law Devyn (who is currently deployed with the 452nd Ordnance Co.) and an English cocker spaniel named Moose.

Email addresses for Ryan and Brian are as follows:

brian.voges@va.gov and ryan.sweeter@va.gov.

Please join us in welcoming Ryan and Brian to our SDDVA team!



GOVERNOR DECLARES PTSI AWARENESS DAY

At the request of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, Governor Kristi Noem has proclaimed June 27, 2019, as "Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Awareness Day," a day to reflect on the causes, symptoms and treatment of post-traumatic stress injuries.

"Our veterans face many life-changing and dangerous situations when they put their lives on the line in defense of our nation's freedoms," said Greg Whitlock, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. "Raising awareness of PTSI is an important step in ensuring veterans have the support they need to make a successful transition back to civilian life. This will help with increased understanding of unseen emotional struggles resulting from PTSI and is critical to the health and well-being of our returning heroes."

It is estimated that between 11 and 20 percent of veterans experience symptoms of PTSI, including up to 20 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

Specialized treatment for PTSI is available through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs at <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/>.

LONGEST DAY

SDDVA and the S, D. Chapter of Alzheimer's Association (AA) announced a partnership to better connect South Dakota's veterans with the resources for Alzheimer's and other dementias. Together we are collaborating on outreach opportunities for veterans and their families to learn more about the educational materials, care and support services offered by the Alzheimer's Association.

"Learning all we can about memory-related diseases is beneficial for our veterans, their families, and our staff," said Brad Richardson, superintendent of the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home. "Increasing awareness about the resources available will enhance the lives of our veterans and their caregivers."

On June 21 — the summer solstice — people across the world will participate in fundraising activities on The Longest Day. Together, the strength of our light will outshine the darkness of Alzheimer's.



SDDVA Sec. Whitlock, Governor Noem and Lt. Gov. Rhoden



SDDVA Sioux Falls Claims Office Staff

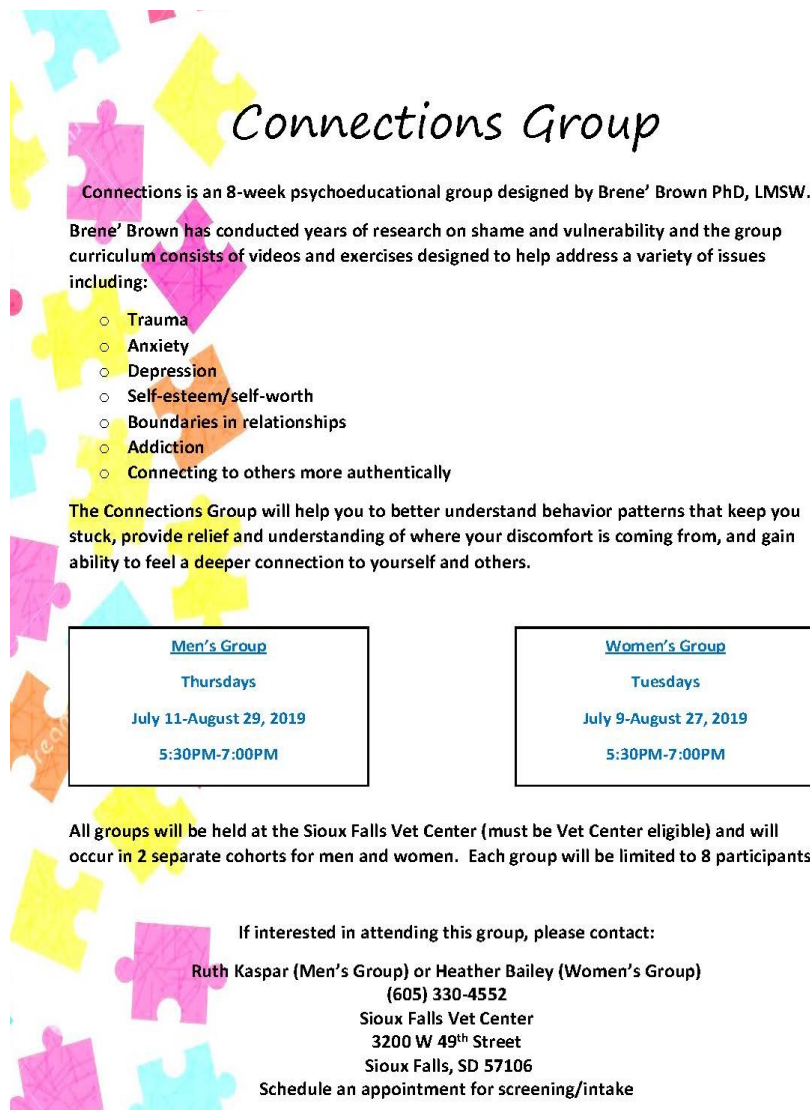


Pierre SDDVA Staff

HAPPENINGS AT THE SIOUX FALLS VET CENTER

The team at the Sioux Falls Vet Center and their partners are offering some great programs for veterans.

Connections group is a new program that will begin in July. All groups will be held at the Sioux Falls Vet Center (3200 W. 49th Street) and will occur in two separate groups for men and women. Interested veterans must contact: Ruth Kaspar (Men's Group) or Heather Bailey (Women's Group) by calling: (605) 330-4552.



Connections Group

Connections is an 8-week psychoeducational group designed by Brene' Brown PhD, LMSW.

Brene' Brown has conducted years of research on shame and vulnerability and the group curriculum consists of videos and exercises designed to help address a variety of issues including:

- Trauma
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Self-esteem/self-worth
- Boundaries in relationships
- Addiction
- Connecting to others more authentically

The Connections Group will help you to better understand behavior patterns that keep you stuck, provide relief and understanding of where your discomfort is coming from, and gain ability to feel a deeper connection to yourself and others.

<u>Men's Group</u> Thursdays July 11-August 29, 2019 5:30PM-7:00PM	<u>Women's Group</u> Tuesdays July 9-August 27, 2019 5:30PM-7:00PM
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All groups will be held at the Sioux Falls Vet Center (must be Vet Center eligible) and will occur in 2 separate cohorts for men and women. Each group will be limited to 8 participants.

If interested in attending this group, please contact:

Ruth Kaspar (Men's Group) or Heather Bailey (Women's Group)
 (605) 330-4552
 Sioux Falls Vet Center
 3200 W 49th Street
 Sioux Falls, SD 57106
 Schedule an appointment for screening/intake

Other events still happening on an ongoing basis include:

- PTSD Group: 1st and 3rd Thursdays each month from 10:00 am -12 Noon (CT)
- Combat Readjustment Group: 2nd and 4th Thursdays each month from 9:00 am—11:00 am (CT)
- OEF/OIF Group: 2nd and 4th Thursday 5:00 pm—6:30 pm (CT)

SDDVA PARTICIPATES IN VETERANS STAND DOWN

SDDVA Field Service Officer Kevin Swanson attended the Veterans Stand Down in Mission last Friday. The Stand Down was sponsored by VA Black Hills Health Care System, Rosebud Sioux Tribe Veterans Affairs, Alcohol Treatment Program and SNETP.

Outreach events afford the Department a great opportunity to work with our County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers and our veterans and their families.



MJFSVH NAMES ADMISSIONS COORDINATOR

Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home now has an admissions coordinator. Lisa Woeppel has been named to the position and will assist CTVSOs, veterans and families in making application to the State Veterans Home.

Lisa's official title is admissions and health information coordinator and can be reached at 605.745.5127 (ext. 1500115). Her email address is: lisa.woeppel@state.sd.us.

COMBAT VETERANS WHO LOVE FISHING

Warriors Never Give Up has openings for eight combat or service connected disabled veterans that would enjoy a fantastic day of fishing on July 15th at no cost.

Veterans will gather at the Hidden Hill Lodge in Roslyn, SD on the 14th for an evening of socializing with fellow Veterans. After a full breakfast, anglers will experience an exciting day of guided fishing. Warriors Never Give Up will cover the cost of lodging and breakfast, lunch and dinner on the 15th and gear if needed.

Warriors Never Give Up is a volunteer nonprofit organization providing outdoor adventures to qualifying combat veterans. Veterans are provided a time to share with others who have experienced the same challenges both during and after active duty. Veterans can register on line at www.warriorsnevergiveup.org. For additional information, email grichard@warriorsnevergiveup.org.

SD GUARD WELCOMES NEW SENIOR ENLISTED LEADER

The South Dakota National Guard appointed a Brookings man to its highest ranking enlisted position during a change of responsibility ceremony at Joint Force Headquarters in Rapid City, June 15.

Command Sgt. Maj. Patrick Couser replaces Command Sgt. Maj. James Hoekman as the organization's senior enlisted leader, and will serve as the adjutant general's personal advisor on all enlisted matters affecting training and utilization of resources, health of the force, and enlisted professional development for both the South Dakota Army and Air National Guard.

"Talk about two outstanding NCOs - you are everything that any commander or service member could wish for in their senior enlisted leader," Maj. Gen. Jeff Marlette, SDNG adjutant general, said of both Couser and Hoekman. "Men of character and integrity, men who lead from the front, men who never lose sight that it's not about them - it's about the Soldiers and Airmen and the organization they serve."

Couser becomes the third person to hold the senior enlisted leader position since it was created in 2013. Hoekman, a resident of Brandon, served in the position since January 2016 and retires with 29 years of service in the National Guard.

"We, as an organization, look forward to your leadership Command Sgt. Maj. Couser and are greatly appreciative of yours Command Sgt. Maj. Hoekman," Marlette said.

Couser has over 37 years of service to the U.S. Army and South Dakota Army National Guard.

He first enlisted into the SDARNG in March 1982 as a heavy vehicle driver with Detachment 1, 740th Transportation Company. Throughout his career, Couser served in nearly every key noncommissioned officer position from team leader to command sergeant major.

Couser served in many key NCO positions during his career such as 1742nd Transportation Company truck master, 727th Transportation Company platoon sergeant, 88th Troop Command senior maintenance supervisor and 665th Maintenance Company first sergeant.

Couser's command leadership assignments include serving as a command sergeant major with the 881st Troop Command, 196th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) and 109th Regional Support Group.

Couser also completed two combat deployments to the Middle East - one with the 740th Transportation Company during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm Desert Storm from November 1990-July 1991, and the second with the 727th Transportation Company during Operation Iraqi Freedom from January 2002-March 2003.

Couser is 1983 graduate of Aberdeen Central High School. He received a bachelor's degree from South Dakota State University in 1994 and a master's degree with the University of Texas at El Paso in 2008 while attending the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy.

Prior to his selection as senior enlisted leader, Couser worked as the shop supervisor for the SDARNG's Field Maintenance Shop #8 in Brookings.



NEW RESEARCH AFFIRMS CRITICAL NEED FOR CAREGIVERS IN VETERAN

New research published in the June 2019 edition of the journal Health Affairs shows the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Elizabeth Dole Foundation are working collectively to better integrate caregivers into a veteran's health care treatment.

The report, titled "[Including Family Caregivers in Seriously Ill Veterans' Care: A Mixed-Methods Study](#)," was led by Duke University researchers and emphasizes caregiver inclusion identified in the [VA - Elizabeth Dole Foundation's Campaign for Inclusive Care](#), which strengthens health care and is a model for improving care in the private sector. The Campaign for Inclusive Care is one of several initiatives and programs through which the VA supports veterans' caregivers.

The study, led Duke University researchers, "[Including Family Caregivers in Seriously Ill Veterans' Care: A Mixed-Methods Study](#)," emphasizes caregiver inclusion identified in the [VA - Elizabeth Dole Foundation's Campaign for Inclusive Care](#), which strengthens health care and is a model for improving care in the private sector. The Campaign for Inclusive Care is one of several initiatives and programs through which the VA supports veterans' caregivers.



"The VA is pleased to partner with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, whose commitment to caregiver support mirrors our own," said VA Secretary, Robert Wilke. "The 'Campaign for Inclusive Care' is a groundbreaking model integrating Veteran caregivers into the fabric of our organization, ensuring veterans' health care needs are met."

The study supports using family caregivers for veteran care and provides recommendations, to include: a call to better define caregiver roles, support for caregiver inclusion in health teams and streamlining legal and privacy regulations currently creating barriers to provider-caregiver information sharing. The study also suggests health care teams (generally comprising a physician, nurse and social worker) build strong relationships with caregivers by inviting their participation in care decisions and creating methods to assess their abilities and assist their needs.

"These findings support the essential idea of a care model that is fully inclusive of veteran caregivers," said Sen. Elizabeth Dole, founder of the Elizabeth Dole Foundation. "We are grateful to work with the VA ensuring caregivers are empowered and providers are better supported in their work to improve veteran care."

The "Campaign for Inclusive Care" builds on findings of the [Elizabeth Dole Foundation's 2014 RAND Report](#), indicating a wounded warrior's best chance for full recovery is a strong, well-supported caregiver.

Learn more by visiting the [Campaign for Inclusive Care](#) website.

VFW STATE CONVENTION

The 89th Department of South Dakota Veterans of Foreign Wars and Auxiliary annual convention was held in Madison last week.

SDDVA Secretary Whitlock addressed the general membership during the joint opening session on Friday. Whitlock updated the members on legislation, benefits, department statistics and accomplishments, the State Veterans Home and the State Veterans Cemetery. MJFSVH Superintendent Brad Richardson also updated the members on the Home.

SDDVA Field Officer Will Huffmon provided members with a briefing on the VA's Mission Act, recent court cases, appeals modernization, and recent studies by the VA as they relate to Agent Orange.

Leadership elected Sean Johnson as their state commander. Sean can be reached at: seanjohnson@abe.midco.net or by calling him at: (605) 228-1636.



Newly elected state auxiliary president is Sandi Moss.

Sandi can be reached at:

Sandimoss46@gmail.com or by calling: (605) 341-0442
C: (605) 431-6897.



VA AND WHITE HOUSE LAUNCH VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION TASK FORCE

As part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and White House initiative to curb veteran suicide, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie and Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council Joe Grogan will launch a cabinet-level task force June 17 to develop a national roadmap.

The President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End the National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS) task force will include a community integration and collaboration proposal, a national research strategy and an implementation strategy.

Efforts supporting the development of the roadmap are already well under way and are on target for the March 2020 delivery to the White House.

"This is a call to action," Wilkie said. "In order to decrease the rate of veteran suicide, we need to engage our local and community partners in addition to leveraging the resources of the departments. We need an all-hands on-deck approach to preserve the lives of our veterans who have served our country. As such, I am thrilled to announce that Dr. Barbara Van Dahlen, the founder and president of Give an Hour, has agreed to serve as executive director of the critical PREVENTS work. Dr. Van Dahlen is widely recognized for changing the culture surrounding mental health and suicide and is an expert and thought leader in large-system change. We are proud to have her leading this effort."

On March 5, President Donald J. Trump signed an executive order (EO) titled "[National Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End Suicide](#)." The EO directed the Secretary of VA and the director of the White House Domestic Policy Council to co-chair and stand up an interagency task force to develop a plan implementing a roadmap for the prevention of Veteran suicide at the national and community level.

As part of the effort to ensure the broadest stakeholder input in the development of the national research strategy, the task force is releasing a Request for Information (RFI) to gather feedback on how to improve research and the use of research to radically reduce veteran suicide. Input may be provided at www.research.va.gov/PREVENTS.

"In signing this Executive Order, President Trump demonstrated that once again he is putting a high priority on the needs of our Veterans," Grogan said. "Through the standup of a collaborative task force, the development and implementation of a public health approach and enhanced research, we will increase our efforts to prevent veteran suicide with the aspirational goal of zero Veteran suicides."

Veterans who are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, and those who know a Veteran in crisis, can call Veterans Crisis Line for confidential support 24 hours a day. Call 800-273-8255 and press 1, send a text message to 838255 or chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat.

CBOC OPEN HOUSE

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Black Hills Health Care System and STG International, Inc. (STGi) will host an Open House to welcome veterans to the new location of the VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic serving the Pierre area. The Open House will be held on Tuesday July 2, 2019 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at 1615 North Harrison Ave. Suite 20 in the Northridge Plaza Mall.

Veterans will see the convenience of new location and expanded size of exam rooms and waiting areas. During the Open House, refreshments will be served, and clinic staff will provide tours and share information about the services available; including a new Women's Health Suite.

"The expanded clinic is a big improvement for veterans in the Pierre area," said Sandra Horsman, Director, VA Black Hills Health Care System. "We are excited to welcome veterans, their families, and the public to our new location."

The Pierre Community Based Outpatient Clinic is part of the VA Black Hills Health Care System which provides patient-centered care to over 19,000 veterans living in a five-state region.

**Join Us for
our Open House!**

**Tuesday,
July 2, 2019
from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.**

**Complimentary
refreshments!**



**New Address:
1615 N. Harrison
Avenue
Ste. 20
Pierre, SD 57501**



Pierre VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic

- Experience the convenience of our clinic size and location
 - *8,090 sq. ft. of clinical space
 - *Centrally located within Northridge Plaza
- Learn more about all of our services
 - *Primary Care, Behavioral Health, and Women's Health
 - *Private women's health suite
 - *Point of care laboratory testing & specialty service referrals

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Black Hills Health Care System

www.blackhills.va.gov

For more information call 844-698-2311

Jun 20—VABHHCS Veterans Orientation Program (Building 53—Room 102) Hot Springs—4:30 pm (MT)
Jun 29—Veterans for Veterans Annual Poker Run—Mitchell Depot Bar and Grill—11:00 am (CT)
Jun 29—State American Legion Commander Homecoming—High Plains Western Heritage Center—Spearfish—Social
at 1:30 pm and program at 2:00 pm (CT)
Jul 2—Pierre CBOC Open House— 1615 N. Harrison Avenue—1:00—3:00 pm (CT)
Jul 4-5—State Offices Closed
Jul 17—South Dakota Veterans Council—PVA Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)
Jul 19-21—“Last Out” Performance—Thomas H. Craig Center for the Performing Arts—Vermillion High School—
Show times 8:00 pm (CT) on 19-20 and 2:00 pm (CT) on 21st
Jul 20—PVA 5th Annual Poker Run—Thirsty Duck Bar and Grill (945 S. Marion Road) - Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)
Jul 20—SD American Legion Auxiliary State President Homecoming—United Methodist Church—Dell Rapids—2:00
pm (CT)
Jul 20-24—National VFW Convention—Orlando, FL
Jul 20—SFVAHCS Whole Health Class—Sioux Falls Vet Center (3200 W. 49th Street) - 9:00 am—11:00 am (CT)
Aug 2—American Legion HWY 281 Centennial Run
Aug 2—American Legion Highway 281 Centennial Run (ND/SD Border to SD/NE Border)
Aug 3-6—DAV National Convention—Orlando, FL
Aug 17—SFVAHCS Whole Health Class—Sioux Falls Vet Center (3200 W. 49th Street) - 9:00 am—11:00 am (CT)
Aug 17-18—Sioux Falls Air Show
Aug 24—Wine and Gala Auction (MidWest Honor Flight Benefit) - Calico Skies Winery
Aug 26—Sioux Falls Barrel House (MidWest Honor Flight Benefit - 10% all day to MWHF) - 4701 E 54th Street
Aug 29—Veterans Day at the Fair
Aug 26-29—SDDVA Benefit School
Aug 31—15th Annual 727th Transportation/DAV Poker Run—Swiftel Center—Brookings
Sep 21—SFVAHCS Whole Health Class—Sioux Falls Vet Center (3200 W. 49th Street) - 9:00 am—11:00 am (CT)
Sep 21—Davison County Veterans Wellness and Benefit Fair—Mitchell Corn Palace—8:00 am—4:30 pm (CT)
Sep 21-22—SD American Legion Golf Tournament—Hartford Golf Course
Nov 2—2nd Annual Hangar Dance (MidWest Honor Flight Benefit) - Mid America Museum of Aviation—Sioux City,
IA—7:00 pm (CT)



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